

Community Engagement Guidebook

2023 Peer Cities Network
Learning Module



Housing Solutions Lab
Building and sharing knowledge to
advance equitable local housing policy.

HESTER ST

ORGANIZATION / DATE

FACILITATOR / NOTE-TAKER

Experience + housing choice

circles that represent the top 2 reasons why you live in your current neighborhood

WORK AND SCHOOL

WORKS

Availability

Availability of Subsidized Housing

Transportation

School Quality

Neighborhood

Sense of Belonging

Environment

Accessibility

Local Businesses and Services

What is your main reason why you want to stay OR want to move to a different neighborhood

Why is it so hard to move to a different neighborhood

Why is living in my neighborhood may be challenging because...

I want to move to a different neighborhood because...

Are any of the following scenarios similar to some of the scenarios you've experienced? Check ALL THAT APPLY

Have you heard a landlord say...

- A1. "Installing a ramp (or other reasonable accommodation) will change the appearance of the building."
- A2. "Sorry. We don't take housing vouchers."
- A3. "No kids."
- A4. "I don't have to make that repair. If you want it, you can move out."
- A5. "There are too many people in your apartment, you need to move out."

Have you heard a family member or a friend say...

- B1. "They told me the apartment was available, but when I got there, they said they had just rented the apartment to someone else."
- B2. "My same-sex partner cannot be added to the lease because of the building's policies."
- B3. "I don't ask for repairs because I'm afraid of being evicted."
- B4. "When they said I was pregnant, they threatened to evict me."
- B5. "I'm not allowed to have my dog."

...and housing challenges

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Left: A community member chooses what neighborhood amenities are most important to them.

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Executive Summary

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Housing Solutions Lab at the NYU Furman Center brings together housing leaders from five small to midsize cities for peer learning, networking, and planning activities to develop innovative, equitable local housing solutions. Network participants focus on advancing specific projects or initiatives intended to address longstanding housing challenges and disparities in their communities relating to local land use and zoning reform; eviction prevention; rental and security deposit assistance; increasing access to homeownership; efforts to increase access to low-poverty, opportunity-rich neighborhoods; or efforts to address vacant, abandoned and deteriorated housing.

Through the cohort-based program, the Lab supports city leaders in building essential knowledge, skills, and capacity to advance their project while working collaboratively with other small and midsize cities throughout the country. Participants have access to timely and practical data and policy resources, technical assistance, and information from housing experts to help them pursue equitable, evidence-based housing policies. They also have access to an ongoing national community of support to share ideas and receive feedback from other practitioners.

During the eight-month program, city teams attend regular sessions providing guidance on creating effective community engagement and communication strategies, designing interventions that draw lessons from past policies, using data to target populations most in need, and measuring progress towards goals, among other topics. Participants leverage Lab data and policy resources and opportunities to work with technical assistance providers that will help with project development and implementation.



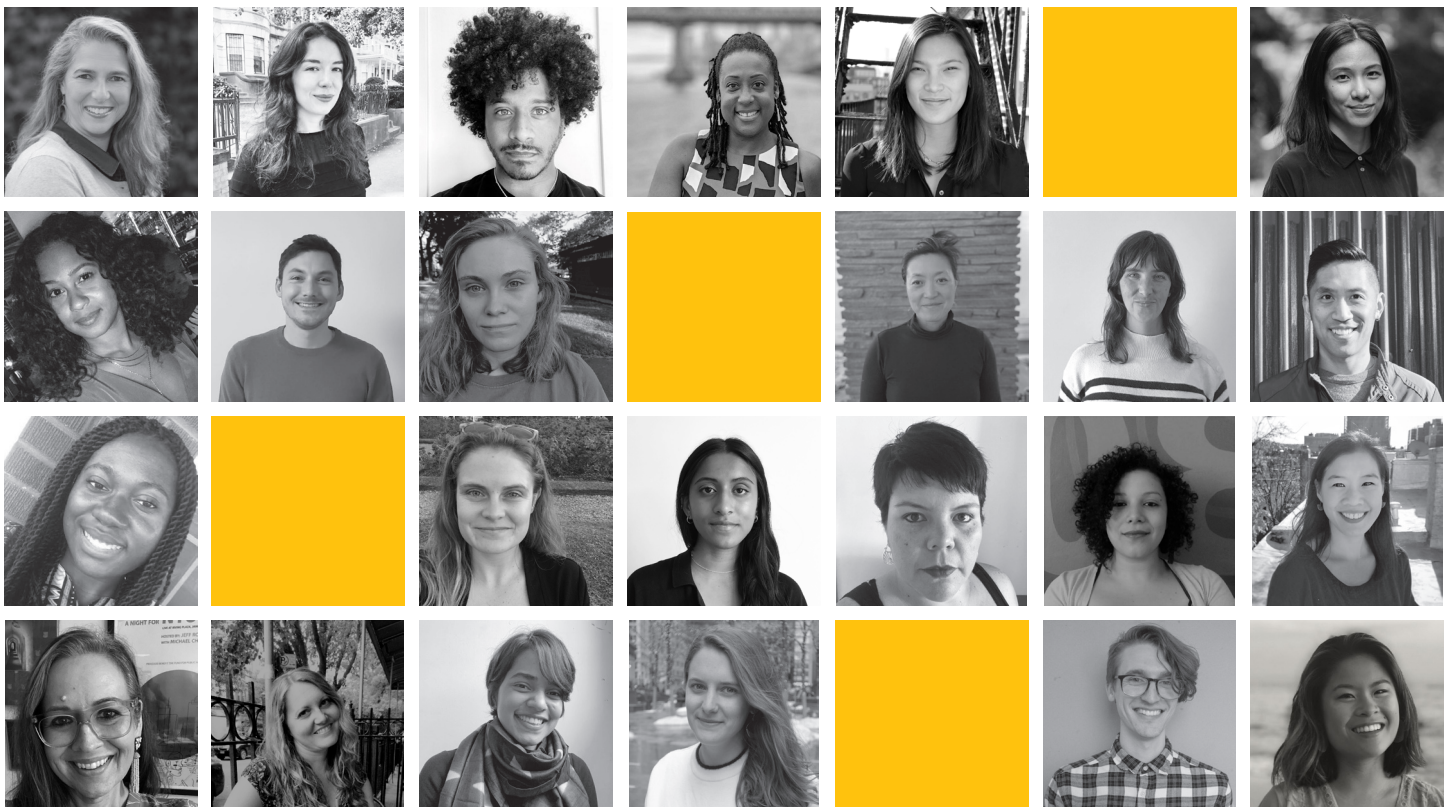
Hester Street: Who We Are

HESTER STREET (HST) is a New York City-based nonprofit with national reach that devotes urban planning, design, and development expertise to support community-led change throughout the five boroughs and beyond. We provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to community-based organizations (CBOs) and government agencies to advance participatory planning, transformative policy, and equitable community development.

HST works closely with people of color (POC)-led and -serving CBOs to provide technical capacity to advance their goals and project work. We also work with government executives, legislators, and agencies to develop and deploy the skills and tools necessary to ensure transparency, accessibility, equity, and accountability to communities of color.

We envision neighborhoods, cities, towns, and regions where resident concerns and priorities are centered in the planning and policy decisions that most directly impact them; and where the health, well-being, and resilience of all community members are valued above profitability and expediency. HST believes in a thriving democracy built on the active participation of everyone, specifically people and communities that have been persistently excluded from decision-making. Designing avenues for inclusive civic engagement is central to our work. We collaborate with neighborhood leaders to foster vibrant civic life that builds community power, cohesion, self-determination, and government accountability.

HST is made up of designers, architects, planners, community developers, and organizers who pair technical expertise with a deep understanding that the most successful projects and plans are grounded in local needs and informed by community priorities. Our staff of 26 is woman-led, majority women (77%) and majority POC (62%).



Hester Street staff.





Community members identify their needs and priorities.

What We Did

Supporting the Housing Solution Lab (Lab), HST developed responsive technical assistance (TA) for three cities within the 2023 Peer Cities Network (Network). Working directly with Skokie, IL; Jackson, TN; and Cheyenne, WY; HST hosted research and discovery sessions with these cities to understand their community engagement needs and the conditions facing working residents, community organizations, and other government entities. Technical assistance and discussion addressed the intersection of community engagement and topics including, but not limited to, zoning and land use, multifamily housing development, green retrofits, naturally occurring affordable housing, comprehensive housing plans, and housing trust funds.

HST synthesized the findings from these discovery sessions and developed individualized community engagement TA plans for each city we worked directly with. Monthly workshops and follow-up activities covered topics such as community engagement planning and strategy development, a spectrum of community engagement stakeholder power mapping, a backcasting exercise, and tools and case studies for engagements.

TA designed for the individual needs of these three cities was complemented by programming provided to the full Network. HST delivered a community engagement training and facilitated discussion amongst the cohort at large as a module within the Lab’s curriculum.

Summary of Recommendations

In order to overcome the affordable housing challenges facing their residents, we recommend that cities:

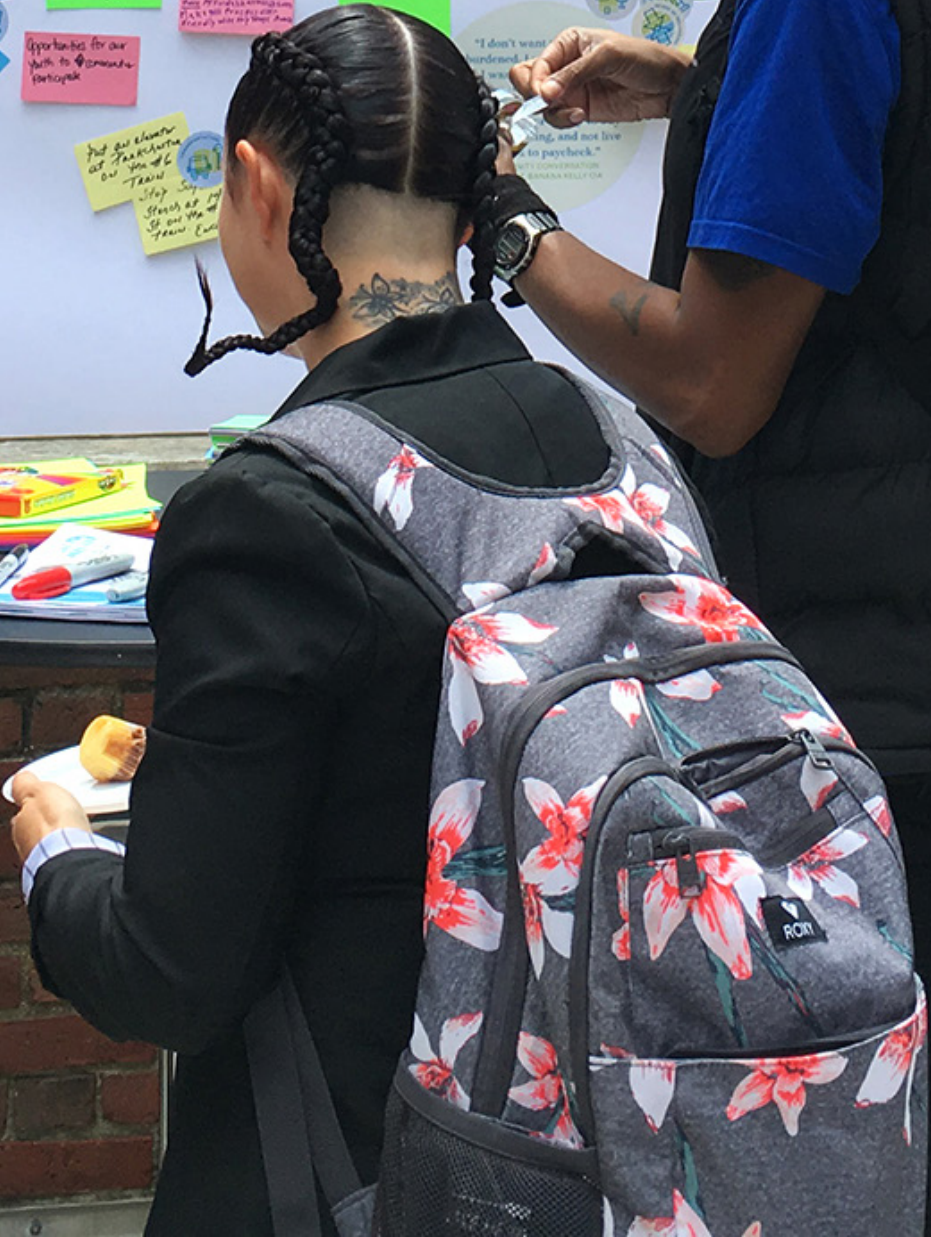
- I. Think big and start small:** Scale engagement plans to be realistic, with a focus on building relationships with one or two stakeholder groups.
- II. Create brave spaces:** Experiment with multiple new strategies to allow for all stakeholders to share their lived experiences freely and with confidence.
- III. Communicate clearly and effectively:** Create and maintain new communication pathways by using plain language and drawing connections between housing concepts and stakeholders’ everyday experiences.
- IV. Compensate communities for their time and expertise:** When stakeholders engage with cities, they are giving their time and expertise. This should be considered a form of labor and compensated as such.
- V. Utilize engagement as community-building:** Community engagement empowers communities by building their capacity to support future work and counterbalance regressive or exclusionary voices.
- VI. Evaluate engagements to foster incremental change:** Tracking and documenting quantitative and qualitative data can build support for further action.



how can we build a more just and inclusive city?

Interactive wall with various sticky notes and graphics. Key text includes:

- what does a diverse and inclusive neighborhood look like to you?**
- BAN PLASTIC GREEN CITY CARDENS**
- APARTHEID DOESN'T WORK**
- EQUAL HOUSING FOR ALL**
- Let's Meet + TALK!**
- AFFORDABLE**
- What are two things about your neighborhood that you want to keep? Two things you want to change?**
- CULTURE + Diversity**
- SEMI-SUBSIDIZED HOUSING SUCKS**
- WE LISTEN TO what they want INSTEAD of making decisions that what they want**
- "I don't want to be burdened..."**
- "I would like more sign language access, more focus on the needs of deaf people, and the internet..."**
- "I came to New York and lived in Harlem and I love being a lesbian in New York City because you can be free to be who you are. I can be me in Harlem. If a person asks me my preferences, I tell them. Everyone in my neighborhood knows and loves me."**
- People of all ages, races, religions, abilities, sexual orientations, and nationalities are welcome in the neighborhood.**
- FREE! No cost of living for people of color..."**
- Put all elements of the neighborhood on the table!**
- Opportunities for our youth to participate**
- Autism, Deaf, and Gender Issues**
- Trucks do and my...**



Introduction to Community Engagement

Thoughtful, inclusive outreach, and engagement should lead to outcomes more in line with community aspirations and values. But it's complicated; frequently, priorities and goals are at odds with one another, and community planners must navigate and balance these disparate goals.

Deep, authentic engagement can take months or years and can be blamed for slowing development. In some areas, market-rate development must account for required engagement processes set in place by local governments, and market-rate housing subject to inclusionary requirements can take even longer. This sometimes leads to efforts to shorten the development timeline by removing engagement processes from it. For example, in New York City some policymakers are pushing to "streamline" development approval by eliminating engagements and environmental review because they blame these processes for slowing down the building process and exacerbating the housing crisis.

In the case of housing, many municipalities grapple with constant pushback from communities to prevent new development and experience ongoing crises related to housing scarcity. Engagement is therefore an opportunity to deliver development by educating, building trust, demonstrating respect, and organizing and mobilizing support.



Community members review posters with maps and other contextual information about their neighborhood.

The quality of development and programs can also improve when engagement is more comprehensive and robust because decision-makers learn the intricacies of their community's goals and priorities. Community engagement can also help set expectations and create a baseline while providing insight into how people perceive change, while shared sets of values and principles developed through engagement can better guide change. Finally, new and unexpected ideas can enrich designs, plans, and policy.

Working with the Network, HST heard many perspectives on how localities used engagement and discussed different perspectives on how to better develop and implement engagement strategies.

Left: Community members engage with an activity wall on the sidewalk in their neighborhood.



Guiding Principles

HST develops engagement strategies to embed community ideas, needs, and priorities into urban planning work. To ensure robust and authentic engagement, we use guiding principles to build quality outreach and participation strategies.

Inclusive

Elevate the voices of communities that have been systematically excluded from power and possibility.

Respectful

Don't give without taking. Honor the time, wisdom, and energy of community members.



Innovative

Use engagement as an opportunity to think outside the box and discover new ways to communicate with communities.

Contextual

Familiarize yourself with community contexts and build on them. Be aware of and build on past initiatives and engagements.



Grounded

Understand how communities have been impacted by past policies and practices that have caused harm and trauma.

Accountable

Follow through with any commitments you make.



Transparent

Clearly communicate what is being decided, how those decisions will be made and who is making them to foster trust.



Generative

Engagement must be generative, not extractive. Don't take without giving; create clear feedback loops.



Community members attend a community fair to learn about changes happening in their neighborhood.
Photo credit: David A. Quiroga of SocialJack Media.

Community Engagement Strategies

Community engagement can mean a lot of different things to different people. In addition, the goals, methods, and stakeholders that municipalities seek to engage can vary greatly.

Standard forms of engagement, like town halls, presentations, and community meetings, often see participation from an active and vocal subset of residents. Those with a surplus of time and resources are privileged by these engagement methods, resulting in an over-representation of stakeholders that skew older, wealthier, and whiter. Therefore, developing and implementing new engagement strategies is critical to reach communities that have traditionally been excluded from engagement and planning processes.

Conducting community engagement can be challenging, especially considering the barriers stakeholders and municipalities face. At the city level, a lack of resources and capacity can make it difficult to communicate complex topics clearly and meaningfully engage with stakeholders. Even when cities engage with stakeholders, rigid processes can make it difficult to implement what communities want. For stakeholders, there is often very little time and willingness to participate in engagement processes, and previous attempts to participate may have left communities feeling fatigued and distrustful. In this report, we review key strategies that can begin to overcome these barriers and create generative, meaningful engagement opportunities.

Left: Neighborhood residents contribute to a community mural activity.

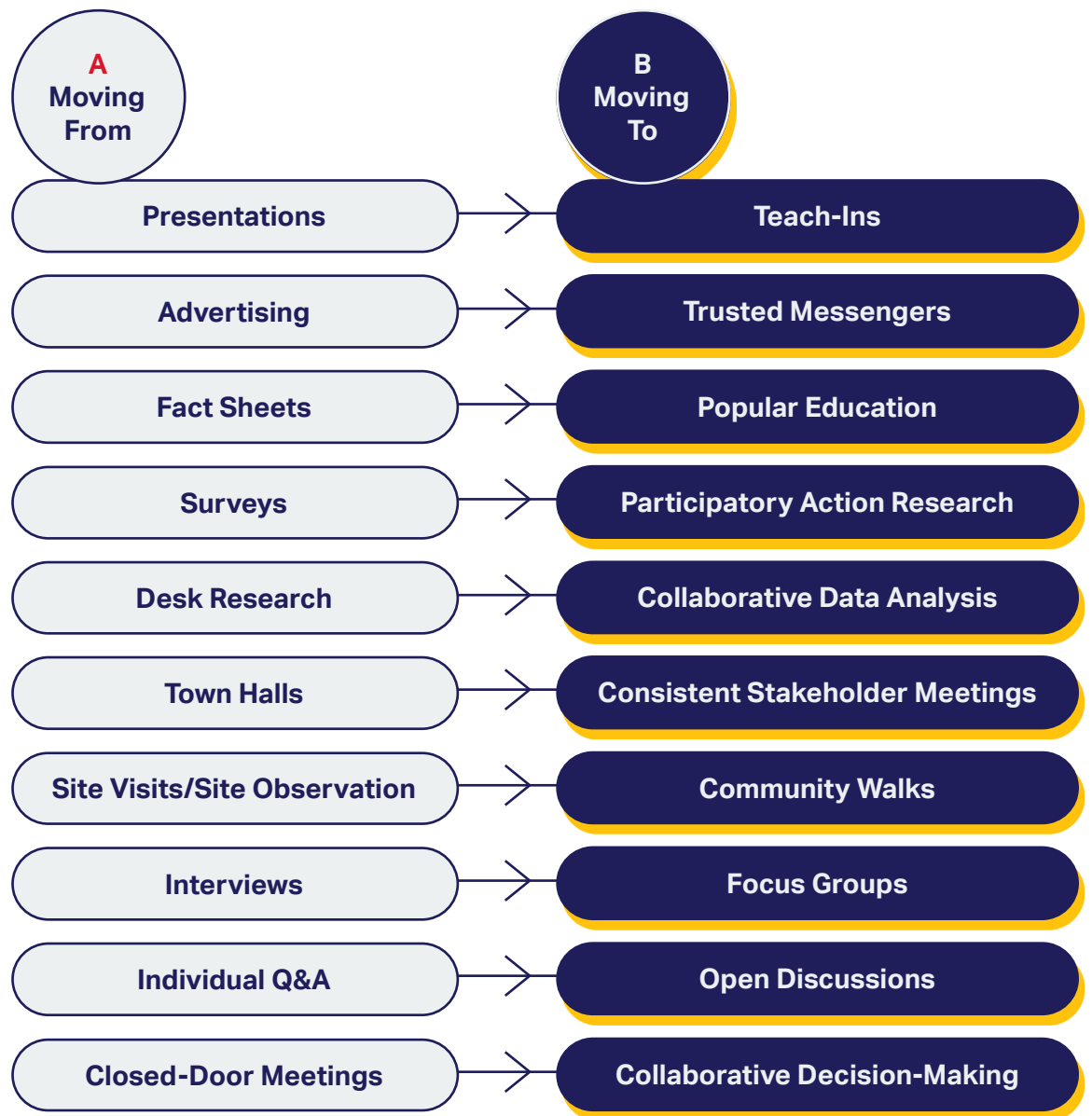


Building an Engagement Process

Community engagement is often talked about as discrete moments whereby city officials engage with stakeholders. However, these events unfold over time, and an effective process requires weaving multiple engagement methods with various stakeholder groups into a cohesive strategy. In this section, we'll provide an overview of what engagement strategies might look like at the Consult, Involve, and Collaborate levels of engagement.

Successfully implementing community engagement processes will push cities to shift towards implementing new tactics and strategies. As cities build their capacity and deepen their relationships with communities, they will begin to move away from traditional practices, which often privilege one-way flows of information and hierarchy, and towards more collaborative, generative, and accessible modes of engagement, which foster discussion and shared decision-making and flatten hierarchies.

See Appendix A for more information about the engagements listed under Column B.



Phases of Engagement

Community engagement processes must be responsive to several factors. Community needs and barriers to engagement, project conditions, legislative requirements, external timelines, and the availability of resources, expertise, and capacity to engage communities will all play an important role in shaping the engagement process. As such, no two processes will look the same.

To structure this discussion of engagement strategies, we'll talk of various phases of engagement that every process will likely go through.

Though these phases are presented linearly, in practice, engagement processes are non-linear and iterative. They require the project team to take feedback, reflect, revise its strategy, and backtrack.

Plan

Define project goals, opportunities, and parameters, identify stakeholders, and prepare to engage with communities.



Outreach

Establish communication channels between the project team and relevant stakeholder groups.



Engage

Collect quantitative and qualitative feedback from various stakeholders during the Engagement Phase through various methods.



Synthesize

Review, synthesize, and summarize data into key findings, themes, and action items.



Implement

Incorporate findings into the project, plan, or process. This might include developing pilots, which can be evaluated through further engagement processes.



Residents of a Council District in Brooklyn engaged in conversation about what they'd like to see in their community.

3

Community Walks

6

Key Interviews

40

Surveys

4

Resident Workshops

2

Tabling Events

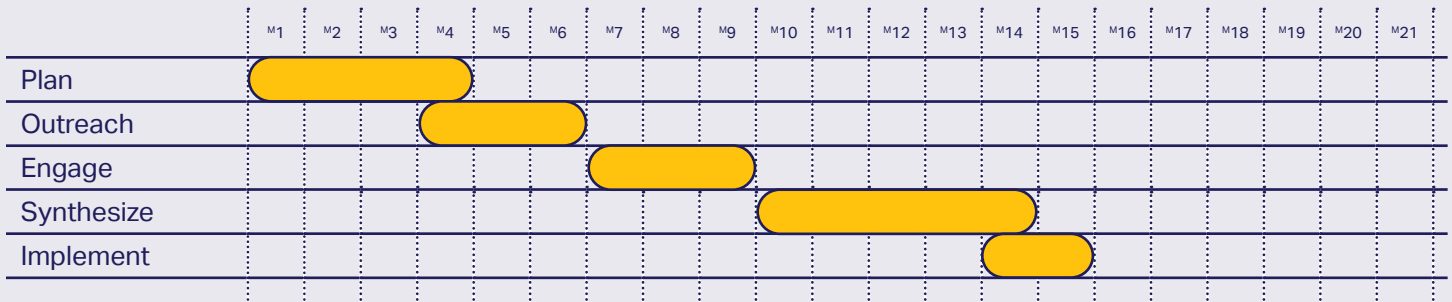
Case Study: Pomonok Houses

Pomonok Houses was chosen as a pilot project for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Connected Communities Initiative. The overall project seeks to address issues of isolation by working with public housing residents to consider how outdoor spaces in their developments should be enhanced, improved, and designed. The goal is to create more spaces for positive interaction and collaboration and improve residents' overall quality of life.

The engagement process resulted in a selection of resident-identified projects that could be implemented in the Pomonok Houses development to address community needs. A participatory process guided the development and implementation of new basketball courts, a splash pad, and a barbecue area were chosen for implementation. Other capital improvements are part of an action plan for the future.



Residents of Pomonok Houses engaged in conversation while painting a bench.



4

Partner Trainings

50

Focus Groups

1

Downloadable Toolkit

2

Debrief Workshops

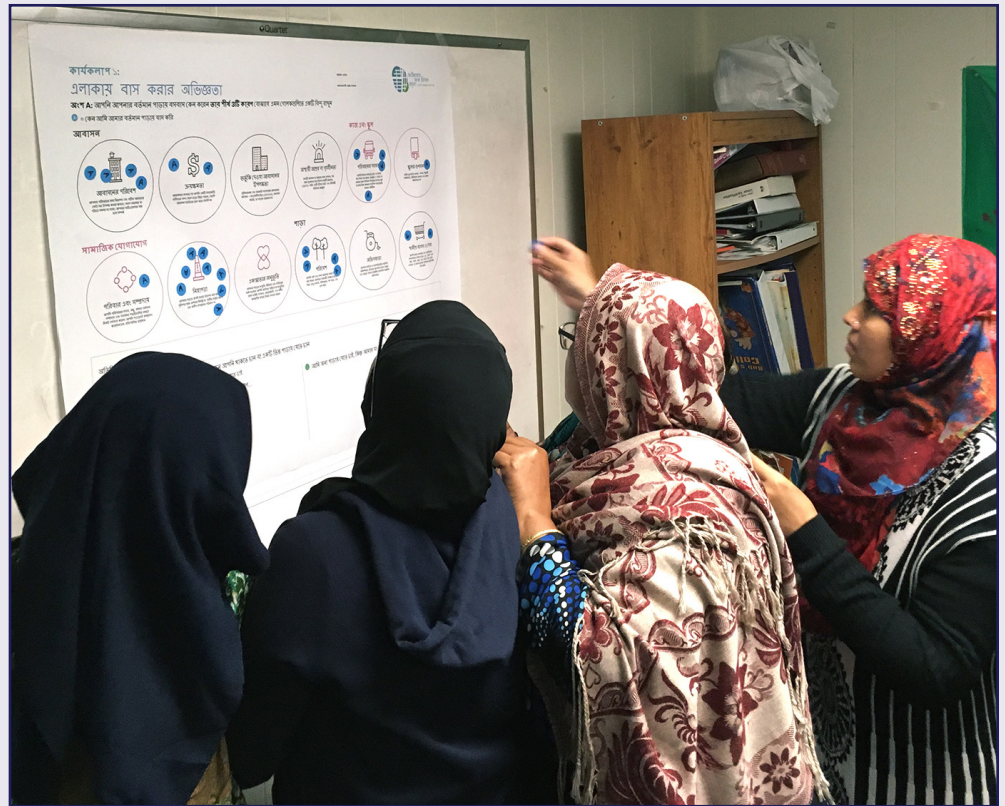
6

Expert Roundtables

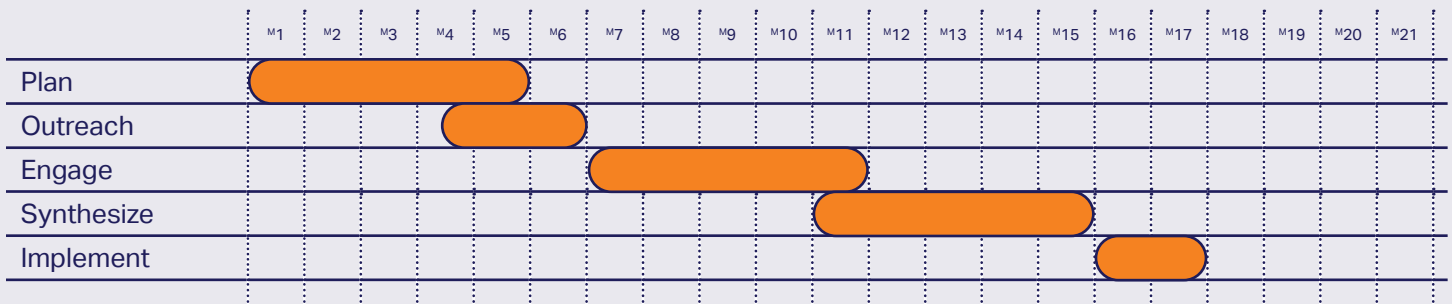
Case Study: Where We Live

Where We Live NYC is an inclusive, comprehensive, and collaborative process for planning how to fight discrimination, confront segregation, and advance fair housing for all. Where We Live seeks to accomplish this by enabling people to move to their neighborhood of choice or stay in their current neighborhood, even as it changes. The program also seeks equitable investing in neighborhoods to ensure that all communities have the resources they need to thrive.

The Where We Live NYC Plan identified six goals, 19 strategies, and 81 concrete actions to be taken by NYC agencies to advance fair housing. Two years after the conclusion of the process, NYC released a report sharing key updates and progress on the 81 actions identified in the Where We Live NYC Plan. Of the 81 actions, 17 (20%) have been completed and 56 (69%) are in progress.



Community members identify their housing priorities in a workshop facilitated by a local CBO.



29

Working Meetings

1

Mayoral Town Hall

2

Public Workshops

5

Shareback Sessions

5

Subcommittee Meetings

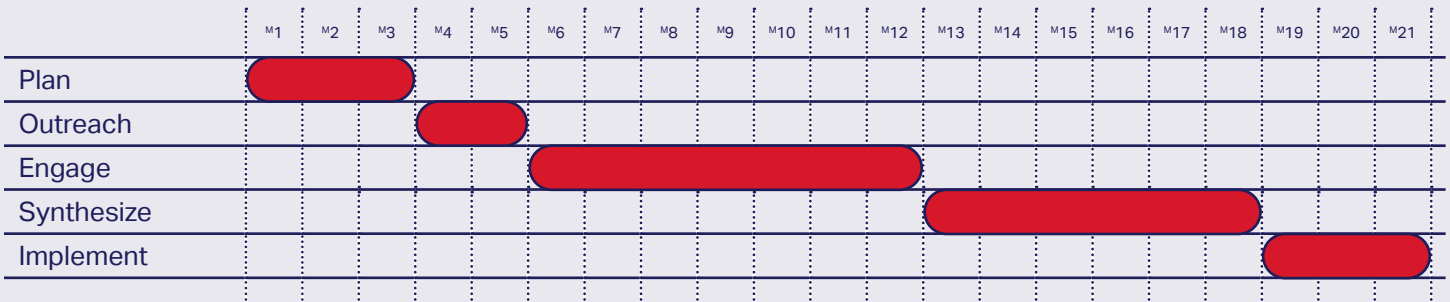
Case Study: NYCHA Working Group

Following community objection to a draft proposal from NYCHA that considered partial demolition to repair and renovate the Chelsea NYCHA developments, local officials, NYCHA residents of the Chelsea neighborhood in Manhattan, and members of the wider Chelsea community called for additional, and more transparent, community input on any plan to address much-needed capital repairs. Engagement had to reconcile significant deep-seated distrust NYCHA faces from residents. In addition, NYCHA had to confront pushback, concern, misinformation, and conflict over a program to fund repairs by converting Chelsea Houses to Section 8 housing in order to access additional funding.

The Chelsea Working Group developed and approved 62 recommendations related to capital finance strategies, resident rights and protections, and resident engagement. These recommendations provide guidance and accountability as NYCHA and resident associations work collaboratively to address resident needs.



A focus group facilitated with residents of Chelsea Houses.

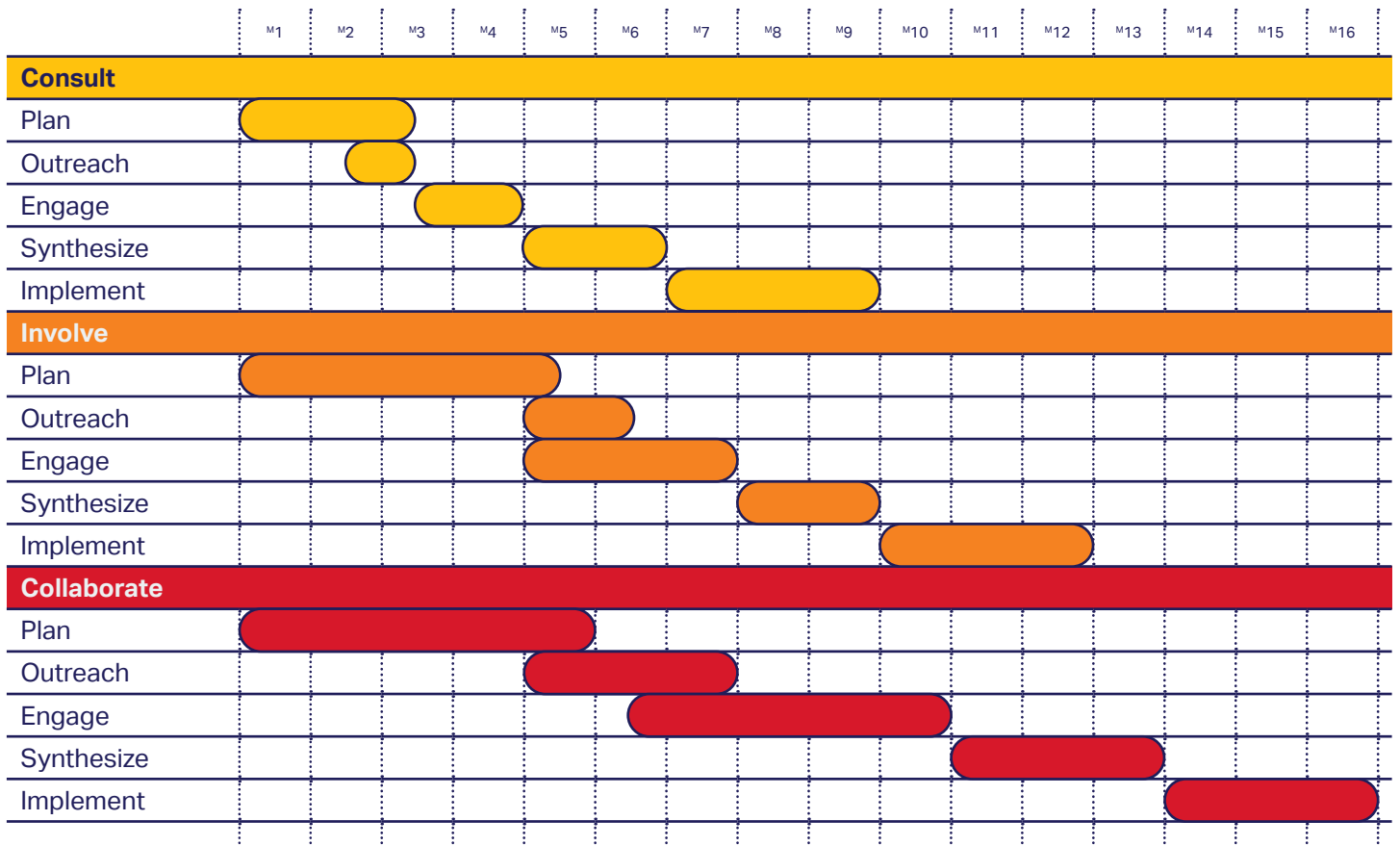


Engagement Timelines

Engagement strategies built with the intention of consulting stakeholders through focus groups, surveys, and community forums are largely driven by the needs and goals of the internal project team. At this level, engagement touchpoints with stakeholders are limited, and the onus falls on the project team to collect, record, and interpret community feedback. This allows for engagement to be conducted on a shorter timeline, but this also limits the feedback received from community members and constrains the modes of engagement with stakeholders.

Deeper levels of engagement call for involving stakeholders throughout the entire engagement process, from planning and outreach to synthesis and implementation, increasing the time it takes. One approach to achieving this level of engagement is by creating a cohort of key stakeholders to support planning and outreach before wider community engagement occurs. These same stakeholders might also lead engagement activities, leveraging their pre-existing relationships with target communities. Additionally, key stakeholders are involved in data synthesis and implementation, reviewing key findings from engagement activities, and making recommendations for implementation.

At the level of collaboration, stakeholders begin to play a leadership and oversight role in program design and implementation. Therefore, these engagements require frequent check-ins with key stakeholders at every phase of the process. At this stage, you might consider creating a working group to play an advisory role. This working group should receive training from subject matter experts and access to capacity-building resources to engage with the project team as peers. Strategies built at this level of engagement require buy-in from decision-makers, strong stakeholder relationships, and a deep commitment from project teams. This results in longer, sustained processes that unfold over months or years.





Recommendations

Skokie faces several challenges to its current affordable housing landscape. While the amount of affordable housing in the Village, which sits next to one of the wealthiest communities in the country (Evanston, IL), is above the 10 percent threshold required by Illinois, the affordable housing stock is disappearing. In 2019, estimates placed the amount of both dedicated and naturally occurring affordable housing in Skokie at 19.9 percent, but as of 2020, the amount of affordable housing had dwindled to 12.9 percent.

This reduction in affordable housing is in part due to the premium on land in Skokie; almost every bit of space has been developed at least once. Therefore, the Village's affordability strategy is focused on building improvement programs, incentives, and grants to support decarbonization and creating pathways for low- and fixed-income residents to participate in weatherization programs, all while preserving the affordability of housing units. Successfully implementing these future actions will require deep engagement with communities, addressing language and cultural barriers, and establishing new communication pathways with Skokie residents who are often left out of engagement processes.

The pace of change is slow in Skokie. While the planning department is active and forward-thinking, local government systems are not always in alignment with their proposals. We've also heard that current engagement processes can privilege the voices of stakeholders with entrenched oppositional views who are slow to change their minds. This has sometimes led to ineffective conversations and created hostile environments that discourage community members from participating. With a Comprehensive Planning process on the horizon and aggressive sustainability goals, now is the time for Skokie to begin practicing new modes and methods of community engagement.



Residents of NYCHA Chelsea watch a presentation given in multiple languages.

Left: A facilitator engages residents of Chelsea Houses in a discussion about their community.



I. Think big and start small

Building an effective and inclusive community engagement strategy requires critical systems thinking, patience, and flexibility. Crucially, the most successful engagement work is centered around people, with special attention given to underrepresented communities, and requires building authentic, meaningful relationships throughout the networks we work in. These plans can be demanding to develop and require time and funding — resources that might be hard to come by — because the work is so far-reaching. But taking a long-range view when designing a community engagement plan’s frameworks, expectations, and goals will strengthen implementation and set projects up for success.

While it is important to be ambitious with community engagement goals and priorities, it’s crucial that work is scaled appropriately to start things off. We recommend identifying one program, plan, or policy to build a pilot engagement strategy around. This pilot should be implemented early enough in developing the program, plan, or policy so that community feedback can be meaningfully incorporated into the final outcomes or deliverables. For this pilot, identify one or two stakeholder groups that you are interested in deepening your relationship with and engage with them using one or two new strategies. By focusing on the relationship-building aspect of community engagement, you can begin to foster connections with communities that will support future work and build your capacity to tap into the knowledge and lived experience of more, and more diverse, stakeholders.

Some community members may distrust government officials due to past experiences or trauma. When there is a lack of trust, it can take a long time to build productive, collaborative relationships. You can start building relationships by working with trusted messengers like community or religious leaders, small business owners, teachers, or family members.

II. Create brave spaces

It’s critical to implement new engagement strategies and tactics that allow for the full participation of all stakeholders to share their expertise and lived experience freely and with confidence. Contrary to some beliefs, this does not call for eliminating disagreement (or dissensus), which can be generative and lead to shared growth and learning. Rather, this requires stakeholders to be engaged in ways that allow them to be fully present. This may take the form of community walks, small focus groups, or online engagements that allow for anonymity. It may also require asking questions in new ways, or utilizing trusted messengers who can comfortably meet with participants. Creating spaces where all feel that they can participate fully also requires meeting the access needs of participants, such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, open or closed captioning services, and language interpretation that fosters connection across languages.

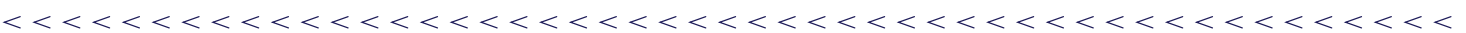
III. Communicate clearly and effectively

For all future engagement activities, communication is key. Creating and maintaining new communication pathways is time-consuming and difficult work, but it’s time well spent. There are three aspects to effective, clear communication: how you communicate, what you communicate, and who the messenger is.

How: It’s important to communicate in ways that community members can understand. Get support from community members to ensure that your communications are culturally appropriate and translated into all necessary languages. A key practice when developing communication materials is to use plain language. Some guidelines for using plain language include avoiding acronyms and jargon, writing for the average reader, keeping words and sentences short, using the active voice and simple present tense, and addressing the reader directly. Using plain language ensures that your communications are easy for

Bringing complex and controversial issues through the community engagement process requires framing and communication that is nuanced, sensitive, and nimble — especially if misinformation pervades the process. The FrameWorks Institute² is a nonprofit research organization that provides resources on topics such as framing housing issues.

² <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/issues/housing>



Popular education materials are an example of a communication tool that connects with the needs and concerns of community members. Messages that clearly connect to the concerns of communities are more resonant and foster greater participation.

everybody to understand and makes the task of translation easier. For some communities, exploring different communication mediums, like videos, posters, podcasts, or comic books may also be worthwhile to get their message across more effectively.

What: What you communicate is just as important as how you communicate it. When developing communications, it's critical to draw a connection to the communities' assets, needs, and concerns. Often, this will require deep engagement to understand what messages will be most effective.

Who: Empower community leaders to share communications with their neighbors. Some community members may distrust government officials and be unwilling to communicate with them. Building the capacity of community or religious leaders, small business owners, teachers, or family members to share your message is an effective way to engage with hard-to-reach populations.

IV. Compensate communities for their time and expertise

When we engage with community members, we are tapping into their lived experience and expertise. This should be considered an act of labor and compensated as such. When you compensate community members for their engagement and participation, you are showing them that you care about their time, and value the expertise and knowledge they possess. Often, compensating stakeholders for their engagement will lead to more active, joyous participation, and can encourage engagement with community members who don't have the resources to engage otherwise. Similarly, for engagement activities that take more time or occur on weekends or in the evenings, providing food, childcare, and access to transportation is also critical to ensure that all are able to participate.

Building and implementing systems that pay community members for their civic participation can be legally and procedurally challenging. A good place to start is to build onto existing procurement platforms or mechanisms. Remember, community stakeholders possess valuable insight and expertise and should be treated the same as any other consultant or subject matter expert.

V. Engagement as community-building

Developing a comprehensive plan for outreach and engagement can be a long, iterative, and unpredictable process. But it can also build the community support and ownership necessary to pull politically or socially challenging — but necessary — projects into reality. Development projects that cultivate freedom of housing choice, and policies that can assure our neighbors have access to safe and affordable homes, are particularly fraught and often emotionally charged. Building trust and nurturing dialogue, while uplifting all community voices, can empower civic participation and anchor community-driven change.

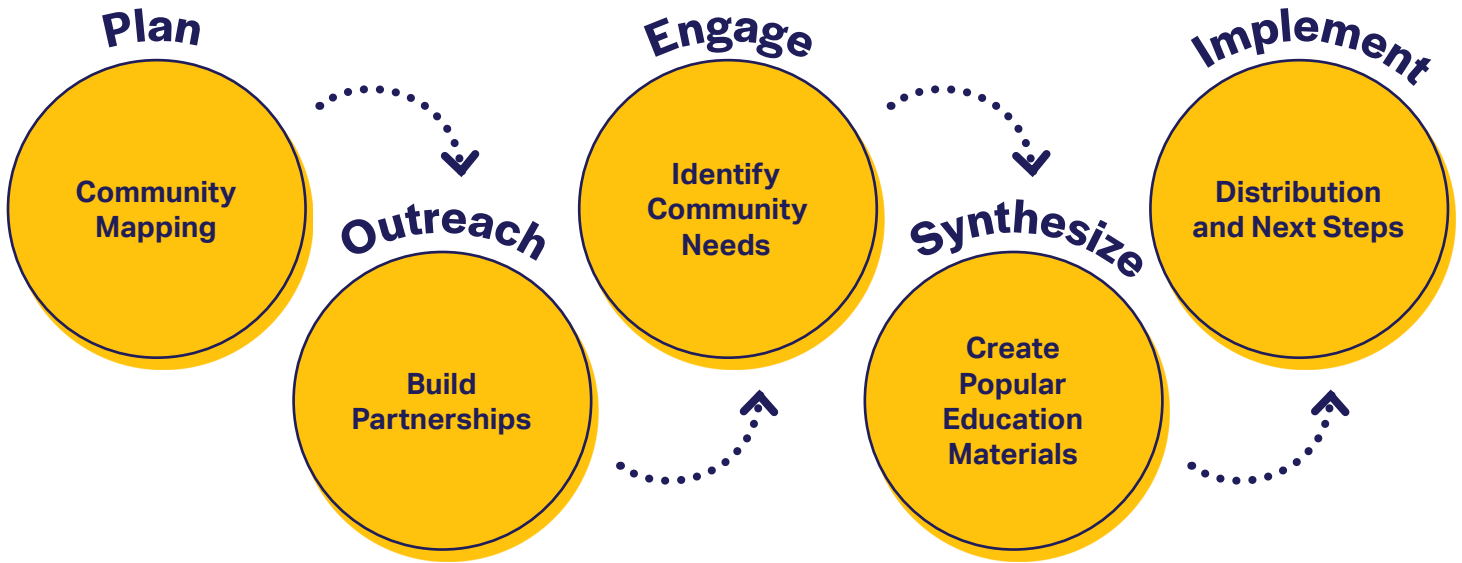
Community engagement processes are not extractive, one-way flows of information. While you are receiving critical information that should guide your planning and program design, equally as important is the capacity you are building within communities to advocate for themselves and shift power. Especially at the Involve and Collaborate levels of engagement, community members who engage with you gain critical knowledge and understanding of government processes and learn how they can continue to stay engaged and advocate for themselves. Build in time within your engagement processes to share information with community members, and build foundations for future learning and advocacy.





Applying these Recommendations

We propose that Skokie begin by piloting an engagement strategy through the collaborative development of popular education materials to bridge the gap between sustainability and housing in the popular imagination of community members, particularly within stakeholder groups that are typically less vocal in planning processes. This pilot proposal is designed to build new communication pathways with communities to grow interest in sustainability initiatives while also surfacing community needs and ground-truthing affordable housing data compiled by the Village.



Plan	Activities
Community Mapping 2 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a program that would benefit from developing popular education materials. 2. Develop a journey map detailing the program you are designing materials for. 3. Identify stakeholders the program is not reaching through stakeholder mapping and data analysis. 4. Conduct key informant interviews with local leaders to identify community assets (i.e., community organizations, schools, religious institutions, libraries, etc.) and determine any access needs in order for communities to participate.
	Deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program journey map • Stakeholder map • Community asset map
Outreach	Activities
Build Partnerships 1-2 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct outreach to community leaders identified via community asset mapping. 2. Enter into contracts with community leaders to support outreach, engagement, synthesis, and implementation. 3. Host an information session with community leaders.
	Deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalized relationships and contracts with community leaders • Information session materials





Library patrons respond to changes coming to their local branch.

Appendix A: Community Engagement Activities

Card Sorting

One popular method for understanding how participants react to presented information is through card sorting. This process involves writing key terms, concepts, or quotes onto cards and handing them to participants. They are then encouraged to reflect and group the cards based on categories they create. Through card sorting, participants' ideas, themes, and emotional responses can be captured and better understood. This process can also be used to group or synthesize qualitative data into key themes or insights.

Collaborative Data Analysis

Sharing and opening data analysis with community members can help build trust in the engagement process and develop a collective understanding among all parties on how to interpret data.

Collaborative Decision-making

Collaborative decision-making involves building consensus among decision-makers. To achieve this, it is important to introduce and clarify the issue clearly, explore ideas through balanced and equitable discussion, form a proposal, allow for opportunities to amend the proposal, and then test for consensus. If no decision-makers object to the proposal, it is accepted. However, if there are objections, amendments are made until a decision can be reached.

Community Agreements

Ground rules for meetings, workshops, or other discrete engagement activities. Community agreements may be developed by the facilitator or directly by the community members.



Community Walks

A walking tour with community members and stakeholders intended to highlight opportunities and challenges relevant to the engagement project. Community walks typically differ from traditional site visits in that they are community-led and organized.

Consistent Stakeholder Meetings

An essential component of community engagement. Consistent, regular meetings with stakeholders are designed to organize work, build trust and relationships, improve communication, and provide opportunities for community-led decision-making.



Design Charrettes

Hands-on workshops with stakeholders focused on design, not just consultation. Key activities may include developing working prototypes, role-playing different processes and scenarios, and collaboratively developing new processes or services.

Focus Groups

Conversations with small groups of stakeholders where key questions are asked and participants are encouraged to build upon the comments and ideas of others.

House Gatherings

Intimate conversations with five to ten neighbors in a comfortable, familiar setting such as a home, front lawn, or community park. Hosting these gatherings in comfortable settings not only creates a sense of community and comfort but can also be beneficial in eliciting specific memories or stories and lead to deeper conversations.

Journey Mapping

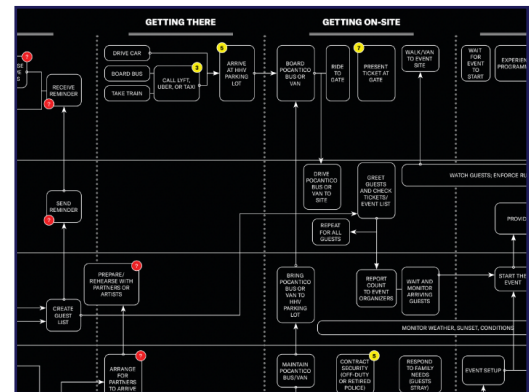
Participants use qualitative data to visualize how individuals and communities would interact with a proposed project or change to the area. Co-creating journey maps with stakeholders provides a systemic, visual way to understand how systems and services are experienced from the perspective of those who utilize them.

Key Informant Interviews

One-on-one conversations with key informants who have direct experience with the topic at hand, which could include community members, users, program administrators, workers, custodial staff, technicians, or others with direct or indirect knowledge.

Open Discussion

Open discussions provide opportunities for participants to voice their opinions on a wide variety of topics, speak for as long as they'd like, and openly ask questions, which can allow for trust-building and more honest, varied feedback. This form of discussion is less constrained than highly organized formats, where, for example, meeting attendees are only allowed two minutes to voice an opinion or ask a question. As a result, these discussions can be much more challenging to facilitate.





Participatory Action Research

Research methods that center the community affected by decisions within the engagement process. Participatory action research (PAR) can include traditional data gathering methods, such as surveys and interviews, but introduces the following additional steps:

1. Collaborating with the affected community in all stages of the research process. Research subjects assume a collaborative role in the research taking place.
2. Taking actions based on the results of the research.
3. Reflection with the affected community about the outcomes and results of the gathered data.
4. Conducting additional research or taking additional actions as a result of (3). PAR methods can continue in this iterative fashion throughout the project or engagement.

Participatory Budgeting

A form of budgeting where community members decide how a budget or portion of a budget is to be allocated. Participatory budgeting may be carried out by public or private institutions. Decisions may be reached by either surveys, voting, or community member deliberation and consensus-seeking.

Popular Education Materials

Popular education, a key term and practice popularized by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the 1960s, connects the personal concerns and problems faced by communities with larger systems and policies, thereby inspiring action. In the context of community engagement, popular education materials share information about programs, policies, or plans in ways that connect with the everyday realities of community members. Therefore, creating these materials requires deep knowledge of the most pressing issues and concerns faced by those you're engaging with.



Prototyping

Collecting feedback on concepts from community members using sketches, mockups, low-fidelity models, or role-playing.

Public Workshops

Large events to reach a variety of residents and community members. Public workshops may occur over a long period of time.

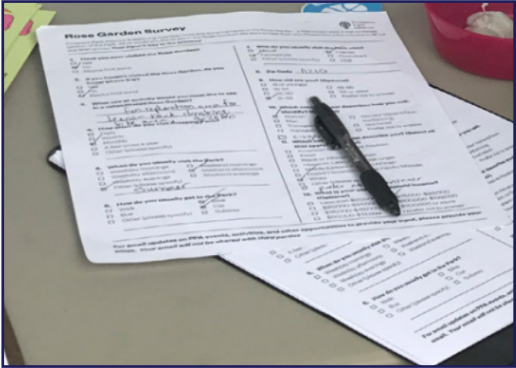


Service Mapping

Mapping internal processes and their impacts using qualitative data is accomplished by creating service maps. Service maps help visualize, record, and organize the internal and external processes required to successfully implement a service. Through service mapping, inefficiencies or bottlenecks that are hindering the service's success can be identified and eliminated. Service mapping can also reveal opportunities for additional touchpoints that can enhance the service implementation process.

Surveys

Questionnaires to gather feedback: either written, online, conducted as a street intercept, or by trusted messengers at locations where stakeholders congregate or gather.



Tabling

Attending community events and gathering spaces; using quick activities or questions to gather community feedback.

Train the Trainer

Subject matter and engagement experts train community leaders or other outreach members from outside the organization on how to carry out engagement activities. Train-the-trainer is often used when there aren't sufficient resources to fully carry out an engagement and also as a way to build capacity among community groups.

Trusted Messengers

Individuals or organizations with significant credibility within the community being engaged. Trusted messengers can be used when there is low trust between community members and decision-makers, when there are barriers to communication (e.g., language), and when decision-makers do not have sufficient personnel capacity to carry out the engagement fully.



Working Groups and Advisory Committees

Smaller groups, typically a subset of a stakeholder group, organized around 1) achieving goals for a specific topic (e.g., working groups) or 2) governance and decision-making for the larger group (e.g., advisory committees).

Right: A young resident shares their vision for a climate-resilient waterfront space.





EAST RIVER

Appendix B: Skokie Backcasting

Hester Street worked with the Skokie team to map out a long-term vision for Skokie and determine the role engagement can play in the near-term.

Goals

What does your city look like in 5-10 years?



Getting There

What needs to happen to create that future?



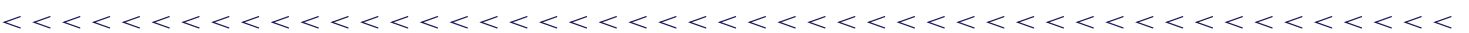
Next Steps

What do we work on now to get us there?



Current State

Where are we now?



Template

Backcasting can be used to strategically plan engagements, activities, or actions to take in the near term to achieve long-term visions and goals.

1. Start by describing the current state (at the bottom of the sheet).
2. Then, articulate a long-term vision or goal (at the top of the sheet).
3. Work backwards (from top to bottom) to determine engagements, activities, or actions you can take to achieve that goal.
4. Continue to work backwards until concrete next steps have been determined.

Goals

What does your city look like in 5-10 years?

Four large red circles arranged horizontally, intended for writing long-term goals.

Getting There

What needs to happen to create that future?

Four large orange circles arranged horizontally, intended for writing actions needed to achieve the goals.

Next Steps

What do we work on now to get us there?

Four large yellow circles arranged horizontally, intended for writing the next steps.

Current State

Where are we now?

Four large dark blue circles arranged horizontally, intended for describing the current state.

Appendix C: Skokie Stakeholder Power Mapping

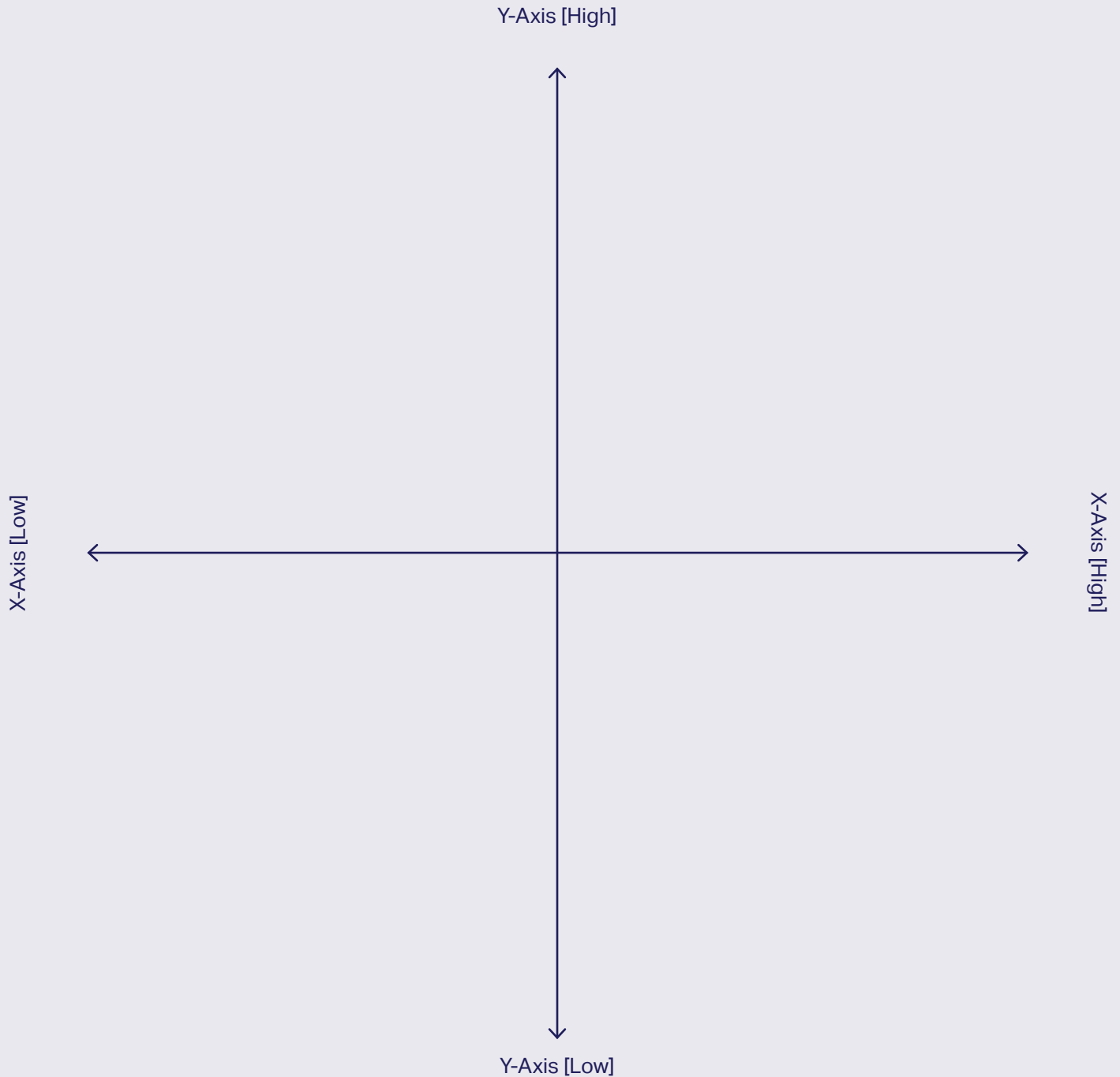
The Skokie team was asked to list stakeholders that were important to their engagement efforts and map them onto a 2x2 grid, visualizing who is most/least impacted by their decisions, and who they do/don't currently engage with.



Template

Stakeholder power mapping is an effective way to identify stakeholders, visualize gaps, and determine strategies to engage with communities in deeper, more productive ways.

1. Start by determining the spectrums for the X-axis and Y-axis.
2. Generate a list of stakeholders and arrange them along the X- and Y-axis according to the spectrums.
3. Give each quadrant of the map a name. Identify gaps and opportunities highlighted by the map.





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